

VRUEC Winter Meeting
January 19, 2005
Smithsonian Conservation and Research Center, Front Royal

We started the meeting at 10:40 a.m. The VRUEC roster was passed around the room for contact information updates. A motion was made to accept the minutes from our June meeting.

Introductions

Members in attendance were asked to share the title of their favorite natural history/natural resource book that they would recommend for a natural resources reading list. VRUEC will post the list as a contribution toward National Environmental Education Week (April 10-16).

- Suzie Gilley, DGIF. *Water: A Natural History*, Alice Outwater
- Ann Regn, DEQ. *Wish You Well*, David Balducci
- Jennifer Buff, CRC. *The Parrot's Lament*
- Kris Jarvis, DEQ. Project WET. *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau & *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson
- Carol Heiser, DGIF. *Walden*.
- Tim Taglauer, Shenandoah National Park. *Sand County Alamanac*, Aldo Leopold.
- Lane Williams, DCR. *True At First Light* by Ernest Hemingway
- Carol Zokaite, DCR. *Beyond the Deep*, by Bill Stone
- Llyn Sharp, VT Science Outreach. *Virginia Outwater* or *Our Southern Highlanders*
- Jeff Corney, Claytor Center at Lynchburg College. *The Star Thrower*.
- Angela Neilan, DEQ. Robert Frost poetry & *Power and Powerlessness in Appalachia*
- Bill Portlock, CBF. *Sand County Almanac. Civilization and the Limpet*.
- Mary Olien, *Man & Nature*
- Jeff Kirwan, VCE and VT, Native American book
- Virginia Witmer, Virginia Coastal Program, *Walking to Canterbury & Dine Bahne, the Navajo Creation Story*
- Paula Klonowski, DOE, *Cook Forest, An Island in Time*
- Lisa Deaton, DOF, *Water, a Natural History*
- Barry Fox, VCE and VSU, *Virginia in the Eyes of Early Explorers, Cry of the Kalahari, Undaunted Courage* by Stephen Ambrose
- Subsequent suggestions:
 - Prodigal Summer* by Barbara Kingsolver
 - Freshwater, A Natural History* by Pielou

Treasurer's Report

The bank account's December 31, 2004 balance was \$22,661 in checking and \$90,000 in account with NOAA. NOAA BWET grant is the only income to the account this year. The NOAA BWET grant runs out in May but we have enough funds available for this summer's Chesapeake Bay Academy and a western academy. The next grant will support the 2006 summer academies. Expenses: MWEE meetings & support \$8,873; Bay Academy =\$41,000. VRUEC will also support extended professional development

events at \$1000-2500 each, but can no longer support just one day events. \$50 k specific to the academy, \$20 K to support MWEE professional development. International Paper has been invoiced for Love-A-Tree expenses. Treasurer's report accepted.

Year in Review: Updates/Reports

Classroom Grants: Jan 31 is deadline for Round 6. Money comes from DCR, who contributed \$50,000 in 2004. DCR has thus far contributed \$25,000 for the first round of grants in 2005 from Chesapeake Bay Program (EPA) pass-through money. Pass-through money from VEE supports MWEEs outside the Bay Watershed. Some schools have received more than one grant as long as it is not to support the same thing over again. The funded projects have to further the scope of work at the school.

Potential for additional funds of \$25 -100 K from NOAA for Classroom Grants in 2005. Next Round will be due this fall. Suzie and Ann will work with Shannon/NOAA on details such as reporting and project completion dates.

Lane, Anne, Barry, Suzie, and Jennifer are the review committee for the Classroom Grants. Carol Heiser also volunteered. If you are interested in reviewing proposals contact Suzie. Barry suggested creating a school district level proposal category with a higher dollar amount if we do really get \$100,000 to spend. Kris concurred that to do a meaningful gardening project spends \$1,000 really quickly. Carol Heiser has received comments about frustration over grants that provide money for plants and teacher training, but not the money needed to buy tools, trowels, and equipment. We turn down requests for Envirosapes since there are numerous models out there to be borrowed around the state. We've even funded music equipment. Jennifer has GIS map of grant recipients. There is only one school west of Roanoke. The Shenandoah Valley and Central Virginia are a bit empty, too. The question arose that if we get additional funding from NOAA, should we set aside a portion for small, regional organizations to apply. Examples would be a SWCD, 4-H unit, or nature center implementing projects that build capacity within that region. Perhaps these could be a bit bigger grants. We have wanted to know the number of students reached in the past, so we have stuck with school applications only. Most who have applied have received funding, unless the proposal didn't fit our criteria. Jennifer suggested more stringent reporting. Pre- and post-event lessons are important, especially the reflection component.

We need to keep the application simple (MAMEA has marine education mini-grant program for \$500 but it has a 4-5 page application).

Kris, Jeff Corney, Jennifer Buff, and Tim Taglauer opened a discussion on the merit of allocating some funds for professional development. Some programs require training for teachers before they can implement an MWEE. Carol Zokaite concurred that the Groundwater Festival works well because there is training ahead of time. Paula stated that she would hate to see us lose the original focus of these grants for the funds to go to classroom teachers. Angela mentioned the helpfulness of evaluation, which would reveal the spin-offs from grant work and other indirect results after the grant project was

completed. Carol Heiser mentioned community projects, and Tim Taglauer mentioned the Luray Greenway project.

Ann made a motion to draft sample criteria for the grant audience, funding level, professional development, and materials. This will not be for the Classroom Grants, but would create a second grant program. The motion was approved. We will also compare details with Maryland's program. Barry, Paula, Carol Z., Bill Portlock, Mary Olien, Carol H., Jeff Corney, and Lane volunteered to draft the criteria. Barry mentioned that the environmental impact/improvement element should be included. Carol suggested a weighted rubric for scoring.

Jennifer Buff **welcomed us to the CRC (Conservation and Research Center)** operated by Smithsonian National Zoo for the conservation of species regionally, nationally and internationally. The site encompasses over 3000 acres. They host professional training and education. The Center's mission goes beyond the 25-30 species of animals that live here. They have an environmentally centered, landscape-based ecology focus. It was originally 75 small farms that were purchased for a remount depot for the U.S. Army Quartermaster. After World War II, it was turned over to the USDA for beef cattle research, and later transferred to the Smithsonian.

New members approved: Three people were present who had attended two meetings, but they were not official members. A motion was made for Paula Klonowski to fill Jim Firebaugh's spot, making Jim an honorary member. The motion also included approval of Jeff Corney from Lynchburg College and Llyn Sharp from Virginia Tech as new members, along with Lane Williams replacing Dawn Shank with DCR. All four were approved as new members.

Chesapeake Bay Academy, Coastal Region: Bill Portlock reported that 43 teachers attended the 2004 Academy and they submitted good evaluation. The Academy will take place on June 20-23 this year, again at St. Margaret's. The purpose is to model meaningful watershed experiences. The Academy will be one day shorter this year. They will spend two days on the open water. They do not offer graduate credit, but \$600 for 3 credits is possible from Mary Baldwin. Someone mentioned that VCU will give 3 credits for \$300 if VRUEC handles the paperwork. Lane and Paula agreed to investigate this more affordable option. Randy Shank continues to assist with coordination of the Academy.

Further upstream, a second academy will be held for the **Mountain Region** (or **Headwaters of the Bay Academy**) coordinated by Carol Zokaite. The dates are August 1-4, and the location is Washington and Lee University in Lexington. They are planning for 40 attendees. Douthat State Park is only 40 miles away and there is much karst geology to explore. Jennifer B suggested connecting both events as High Quality Professional Development, and simply add some language indicating that their content complements each other. Carol asked about offering graduate credit. Registration for both events is handled by Virginia Tech on the internet. Publicity information goes to Paula and Jennifer Comfort for Superintendents' memo and VaN website.

Bay Academies ... events from Smithsonian ... VSSI July 18-22 at Twin Lakes State Park and others: **Please send information to Jennifer Comfort as soon as possible.** Ann asked for ideas on the format of this information on the VaN Website. The group liked the idea of a visual calendar with squares for dates and the ability to click on event which will be linked to details. Can we have links to the Professional Development calendar from the general VaN Calendar? Bill has dates to add to the list of CBF events.

Jennifer Buff, CRC - Their focus is teacher training and EE. They will offer several 2-day courses centered on science in real world situations. They are continuing their literacy in Africa project. They have offered workshops at the zoo in DC, so they are now willing to travel to provide workshops.

Kris, DEQ – Project Wet reached 900+ teachers in 2004. The Blacksburg and Roanoke area had about 10 workshops. There are three Sixth Grade Science Standards Institute scheduled for 2005. This year's locations are Chasapeake, Abingdon, and Prince William Co. Schools. They are funded with a NOAA grant and focused on sixth grade science SOLs. Kris has compiled a website, Standards of Learning correlation and curriculum supplements.

Carol Heiser, DGIF – In 2004, Carol coordinated four summer Outdoor Classroom Institutes. 65 teachers attended, presenting 25 different schools. The teachers were enthusiastic. Carol will conduct a survey this next year that will concentrate on homeowner habitat development and certification. She would like help in getting the word out to coordinate efforts. She is also working on conservation landscaping within the community.

Tim, NPS – They are waiting on a federal budget!! In the meantime, they are in a survival mode. Their focus is K-6 grade programs, which are already booked for the spring. They are trying to maintain the quality of their existing program. They are likely to obtain a grant to develop a history-based CCC program. The plan to convert the welcome center into a restaurant and a CCC museum with educational programs. They hope to finish a CD-ROM project started earlier to get kids outdoors and do research. They are also finishing an elementary level stewardship curriculum that ties into the stewardship goals of the NPS.

Lane, DCR is involved in the Classroom Grants and Headwaters Academy. They are gearing up for their summer programs. Adopt-a-stream is looking for ideas to expand and educational opportunities for adults.

Carol Z, DCR & Project Underground – She held a facilitator training in September. Those trained are doing workshops and national karst events. Carol is going back to graduate school at VT and working on Headwaters Academy.

Llyn, VT - The Blacksburg VMNH has been shut down. Llyn is now doing science outreach and working with the collection of minerals in geological science portion of VT. She coordinates teacher training efforts at VT.

Jeff, Claytor Nature Center at Lynchburg College – The center has just opened within the last year. They will be doing a renovation of older buildings for field studies and horticulture. This is tied into a VT grant for an experimental site for alternatives to tobacco. The first year of his 2-year EPA meaningful field experience grant has been successful. Claytor has now formed an advisory board that will be looking for sponsorship for the center.

Angela, DEQ – She is working on DEQ's community involvement policy. DEQ recently sponsored 7 regional open houses at their regional offices. They will be working on plans and the results will be up on the web. They have received lots of questions from the public about who does what in natural resources.

Jennifer, DEQ – The Love a Tree Kits were scaled down this year. Litter was the theme. They are a component of VDOT's spring 2005 litter campaign. The kits are now available for distribution.

Bill Portlock, CBF – CBF trained 175 teachers at 5-day long classes last year. They offered one-day classes for teachers during the school year. Attendees recruited other teachers for one-day sessions. who will come to the Academy this summer. The Academy looks at how to lead MWEs on school grounds, grant-writing, and the different types of projects. There is an opportunity with NOAA to look at one watershed and incorporate Northumberland, Lancaster, Fairfax, and Augusta Counties. A Potomac partnership could create a river-based curriculum using the existing materials in counties. CBF can handle 2,000 students per year, and all Life Science teachers are being trained. A poll of 600 general voters last August indicated that 2/3 of Virginians want clean water. People don't know what the problem nutrients are. They just know that pollution is bad. Most people think their own stream is not polluted.

Mary Olien, State Arboretum – Judy Hoff is gone, but they are now fully staffed. 5,300 school kids attended their programs last year. Their registration for spring is already full. She has 2 education staff. They are offering spring teacher development, including Marion Lobstein's Intro. to Chesapeake Bay class and evolution. Let's Sprout and Water Wonders program were evaluated with a recent grant. There is a middle school focus group tomorrow night. Pre- and post-program materials will be discussed. UVA is renovating the observatory and will expand their science outreach from there. There will hopefully be some collaboration with Blandy Farm. They have also submitted a NSF grant for undergraduate research. A stipend and housing are provided. Summer research experiences are available for teachers, too.

Jeff K., NOAA - A Tidewater proposal was submitted based on GIS research on the most denuded stream banks in the Bay watershed. The Project Learning Tree *Places We Live* module is the curriculum piece for these grants. The Virginia 4-H team placed

first in the wildlife competition, Virginia's team from Augusta Co. placed second at the Envirothon competition, (\$2000 prize per child), and Virginia came in third in the shooting sports shoot-off. Virginia hosted the national Wildlife Habitat Evaluation contest in Blacksburg last year and the National Shooting Competition is eyeing Virginia as a host state. The 4-H Virtual Forest is complete and linked to What's New on the VaN website. A Master Naturalist program is being developed for Virginia modeled after the Texas program. DCR Heritage, VCE, DGIF, Douthat SP, Mike Hayslett, and Ellen Powell are on the advisory committee that is working to form Virginia's program. 31,000 children attended 4-H summer camp in 2004. Jennifer suggested a link to the Natural History museum and any para-taxidermy interests for the Master Naturalist program. An MOU is being developed to figure out the structure for hiring a Master Naturalist program coordinator.

Virginia W, DEQ - Coastal Program receives 100% funding, about 2.5 million a year, from NOAA and provides financial support to the Office of EE. Most of the Program's networked agency partners are represented on the VRUEC. Virginia is currently only communication/outreach staffer however position soon to be filled which will be 40% dedicated to assisting in the Program's outreach efforts. The Virginia Coastal Management magazine is available on-line at <http://www.deq.virginia.gov/coastal/publicat.html>. The Coastal Program Web site is being redesigned to conform to new state agency template standards and will be available by the end of February. Currently under development, and to be added to the site as they are developed, are a series of coastal management issue pages. These pages will provide an overview of coastal management resources, e.g. dunes, and how the Program is addressing management of these resources. The intent is to provide a big picture and illustrate the coordination and partnerships involved and necessary to achieve effective coastal resource protection and management, so in addition to descriptions of pertinent projects and studies conducted or underway, the page will provide links to coastal partners and on-line resources and downloadable reports, brochures, guides, environmental education handouts etc. Where possible, guidance on how localities and the general public can help will also be included, i.e. the Program is developing an on-line Coastal Conservation Guide for Property Owners and currently offers a G0-Native page on its site encouraging the planting of native vegetation. VRUEC input to this Web site is always appreciated. The "Cecil of the Seagrass" Seahorse costume and "Omar of the Reef" oyster costume are available for loan, and travel complete with seahorse cookie cutters, the Amazing Oysters activity, bumper sticker, tattoos.

Paula, DOE – Virginia needs to track MWEs. Superintendents' memo went out yesterday saying that there will be a survey in May for school divisions to complete. Our main target is the senior class of 2005. They are not being forced to complete the survey so we will see how many come back. DOE will initially seek information from elementary, middle, AND high school. There will be more GPS workshops in the fall. They have already trained 100 teachers at 5 workshops around the state. There was a huge response to these workshops and considerably more teachers registered for them than could be accepted. The JMU Content Academy will be in June. It is funded

through a special education grant. This academy will have a sixth grade and earth science focus.

Lisa, DOF – NEETF is coordinating a National EE Week which falls on the week prior to Earth Day. She and Ann encouraged everyone to register their programs and events to help with participation and visibility of our work. PLT is revising the PreK-8 Guide this year and the new Places We Live and Forests of the World modules should be printed this year. Virginia will host the 2006 PLT International Coordinators Conference. Lisa is the coordinator for Holiday Lake Forestry Camp this year, and there will be an on-line nomination form available at the DOF website this year.

Barry - Holiday Lake 4-H Center is building a conservation education center. Mike Hayslett is the Director of the new EE center there. Jamestown and Wakefield 4-H Centers now co-op with Nauticus. Next week's training will offer a curriculum fair for committees, Master Volunteer Training, and water education. Hinsley settlement in Lee County, deserted mountain top, sand cave. MAMEA conference is in October. There will be an anadromous fish celebration at James River Park on Earth Day. He hopes to include some EE issues in the program this year. The Water Wizard van is being refurbished. We need to reform the Water Wizard committee to work on a new program. Barry is also working on a "What do you know about water quality" slide show game that is divided by grade levels.

Suzie , DGIF – A small VEE grant was received by Portsmouth Schools to develop math activities using graphing calculators with data from agency which will be available on the website. Woods, Water, and Wildlife summer course is designed for high school teachers, offered at VCU this summer. There is a new WILD guide, Flying WILD, which has a bird festival focus. There is a DGIF sponsored Scout Camporee at the Chickahominy WMA on April 1-3 and the National Boy Scout Jamoboree will be at Fort A.P. Hill this summer.

Jeff Kirwan mentioned the Earth Day event at AP Hill. They have 1,500 kids coming and are looking for program assistance.

Ann, DEQ – Ann passed out DEQ's EE 2004 Summary.

Strategic Planning and Coordination Session – Angela Nielan facilitated this session which ended our day. Notes to follow separately.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Deaton
May 5, 2005
7 pages